# Cut Scores

All individual assignments are graded on the following 4-point rubric:

4 = Advanced Understanding of the Standard

3 = Meets the Standard

2 = Approaches the Standard

1 = Does Not Meet the Standard

IE = Insufficient Evidence to Determine Level of Understanding

ME = Missing Evidence of Understanding

Each standard is further detailed by a rubric specific to each assignment or type of assignment. Individual grades are entered into the appropriate Gradebook Reporting Criteria and then an overall score for the GRC is determined by team/department agreed-upon structure. From these GRC scores, a total grade is calculated from the weighted average of the GRC’s.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | GRC1 | GRC2 | GRC3 | GRC4 |  |
|  | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 |  |
| Ex: | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 |  |
|  | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 |  |
|  | 2.7 | 1.3 | 3.0 | 3.6 | 2.65=C |

Notes:

* Individual assignment scores must be whole numbers only. (1,2,3,4)
* Scores for a GRC will be decimal values

The following scale determines the overall letter grade, which are then defined as shown:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 3.5 – 4.0 | A | Always demonstrates understanding of standards, and most of the time shows an advanced level of understanding |
| 2.75 – 3.49 | B | Almost always demonstrates understanding of standards |
| 2.25 – 2.74 | C | Usually demonstrates understanding of standards, but not necessarily always |
| 1.75 – 2.24 | D | Rarely demonstrates understanding of standards |
| 1 – 1.74 | F | Very rarely, if ever demonstrates understanding of standards |

This conversion scale is the result of first defining the meaning of each letter grade relative to the definitions used in the rubric, and then choosing the range of average rubric scores that represents that definition. All of these definitions are built around the idea of a student meeting the expectations of the class. This reflects Standards Based Education. The expected standard of performance is consistently defined and communicated to students in the form of one or more rubrics.

Next, a numerical average must be defined that reflects each letter grade definition. An A student would receive a lot of 3 and 4 grades. Specifically, if there were 12 assignments, an A student would have at least six 4’s and six 3’s. Five 4’s and seven 3’s would not be demonstrating an exemplary level of understanding “most of the time”. Therefore, that student should get a B. This establishes the boundary between an A and a B at 3.5.

That one was pretty easy. The next one gets more complicated. The 4-point rubric neatly translates only to certain letter grades. Essentially a 4 and an A have the same definition, as do a 1 and an F. How do 2’s and 3’s translate into B – C – D?

We already established the top boundary for a B at 3.5, where is the lower boundary? A student receiving a B almost always demonstrates understanding of standards. That means that they almost always get at least 3’s. They might get some 4’s, but they do not get enough 4’s to receive an A. However, they might also get some 2’s, but not enough to receive a C. Therefore, the lower boundary is set a little below 3, at 2.75. A B student might not always demonstrate understanding of standards, but those times that they don’t are mostly (but not necessarily completely) balanced by the times they show an exemplary level of understanding.

The definition of a C gets trickier. From the B boundary, C’s are below 2.75. An average at 2.75, in general, means that a student gets more 3’s than 2’s. At 2.5 the number of 2’s equals the number of 3’s. Below 2.5 there are more 2’s than 3’s. How far down should the range go before there are too many 2’s to receive a C? An average of 2.0 indicates that a student is always “partially understanding”, and never shows adequate understanding (or at least the times that they do are balanced by the times that they are insufficient). A student who received all 2’s should not be considered completely successful in a course of study. That should equate to a D. Therefore, the lower C boundary should be higher than 2.0, but lower than 2.5. This results in 2.25.

The only boundary left is the line between and F and a D. How low is too low? This is the most difficult line to set. It is the difference between passing and failing. An average in the 1-point-somethings indicates a lot of 0’s and 1’s. We can imagine a student who receives half 1’s and half 2’s, resulting in a 1.5 average. Should this student pass? Or, if we go back to the 12 assignment example, what about a student with nine 1’s and three 4’s? This average is 1.75. This goes to the concept of “completing a course of study” versus knowing material. A large part of the educational experience is the demonstration over time of knowledge, growth, perseverance, and discipline, not merely a few examples of proficiency. These intangibles are what develop understanding as opposed to mere mechanics. Successful completion of a class means more than just a skills checklist. This is why the D-F boundary is so difficult to set. Currently 1.75 is used as the cutoff between D and F. This is mostly due to qualitative observation, students that really deserved Fs were getting Ds because the boundary was too low.

The letter grade ranges of the resulting scale are not equal, and they are not intended to be. They are based on specific, logical decisions in order to create a fair, but rigorous standard of performance for each grade level. The goal is to know the difference between what an A student and a B student (etc.) do in class.